

Obituary

William Neville Mascall, 1902-72

Neville Mascall, who died in July, 1972, was one of the fortunate young men who received their early training in venereology at St. Thomas's Hospital at the hands of that distinguished pioneer of the subject, the late Colonel L. W. Harrison. He studied medicine at Cambridge University and St. Thomas's Hospital and qualified in 1926. After a period as Assistant M.O.H. at Rotherham he returned to St. Thomas's to join the staff of the V.D. Clinic and so experienced a quality of training which in those days was unequalled. In 1930 he was appointed Chief Assistant Medical Officer to the Whitechapel Clinic of the London Hospital when the management of V.D. cases had been taken over from the Hospital by the London County Council. In the strenuous years that followed Mascall's early training, capacity for hard work and devotion to duty stood him and the Clinic in good stead and helped to give that organization the good name that it soon came to enjoy. With the outbreak of the second world war and the death, soon afterwards, of the Director of the Clinic, Lt.-Col. E. T. Burke, Mascall was appointed Acting Director for the period of hostilities. With deteriorating conditions due to bombings, black-out, shortage of staff, and shortage of essential supplies, he contrived to keep the Clinic going in a manner that was a considerable tribute to the strength of his character and the quality of his determination. By night he did his tour of duty as Medical Officer to a First Aid Post near his home in the West End and he was injured in an air raid on at least one occasion.

Mascall was a man with a great love of the sea and it was a considerable deprivation for him that, because of the nature of his responsibilities, he was not permitted to volunteer for the Royal Navy.

After the war he stayed at Whitechapel for a while and then took over the Directorship of the other London County Council Clinic, at Endell

Street in Holborn. In 1948, with the establishment of the National Health Service, his Clinic became part of the Institute of Urology, formed by the grouping of St. Peter's, St. Paul's, and the Sheffield Street Hospitals. He was then joined from St. Peter's by the late Mr. A. H. Harkness and they directed the Clinic jointly. When Harkness retired he became the sole Director until the time of his retirement over 5 years ago.

Mascall had the qualities of quietness, strength, loyalty, and industry, all of which were great assets to him and his colleagues in the difficult times in which he practised his special subject. To work with a man so dependable and so loyal was in itself a considerable experience. To his patients he gave devoted attention, sympathy, and understanding to which they responded with a regard which often amounted to affection. He had a very sound knowledge of his subject and was a reliable investigator. He was not especially gifted as a speaker or a writer but, although his contributions to debate and to the literature were relatively few, they were always to the point and always well worth hearing or reading. He gave notable service to the Medical Society for the Study of Venereal Disease, as Honorary Secretary in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and then as President in the middle '50s. He represented a generation of venereologists which is now dying out but which bore the heat and burden of the day, in times when the heat could be considerable, the burden heavy, and the pay, by modern standards, far from lavish. The subject owes a considerable debt to such a man.

His later years were saddened by a painful and progressive illness which he bore without complaint. He was a man who made many friends and all of them, in and out of the medical profession, will join with his widow in sorrow for his death.

A. J. King